Dr. Faustus Died for Your Sins: Christopher Marlowe and the Ascendancy of Corporate Culture

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Theatrical spectators often feel protected by the proscenium, as if the events presented on stage are fictional and the lip of the stage somehow keeps the audience a safe distance from serious threat. This theatrical discrepancy may have been perceived as to undermine the autonomy of the early Protestant church which, under the tutelage of John Calvin, stressed that the scenes described from the pulpit were very real as opposed to those found in the common theater. Unlike a theatrical audience, a church congregation could not expect protection from the Devil except by the divine intervention of God or Jesus Christ. Even in early performances of *Dr. Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe several spectators were convinced that the Devil, albeit impotent, had made an unscheduled appearance on stage, thus lending visual if not theological credence to the theatrical experience.[1)] The theater during the late sixteenth century challenged the authority of the church in its ability to provide alternative, non-religious images with which to influence the audience, images which began to compete with the church for domination over the imagination of early modern culture. The assumed safety afforded the audience from the events on stage, however, is an illusion, as the alleged appearance of the Devil during *Dr. Faustus*. The proscenium arch offers a false sense of security since, as William Shakespeare succinctly stated in *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage." In his landmark drama *Dr. Faustus*, Marlowe echos this familiar

renaissance sentiment as well: culture is theater, nor are we out of it.

Of course, the events of all dramatic heros have everything to do with the audience and the larger cultural context from which they emerge. What Marlowe, through the agency of Doctor Faustus, brought to the attention of the world is what we now recognize as corporate culture—a system based on the deliberate construction and manipulation of illusion in order to influence and control the burgeoning Elizabethan consumer culture for private profit. Marlowe's crimes of cultural indiscretion as well as Faustus's crimes against a Christian (especially Calvinist for whom God's grace was a matter of pre-destiny) community set against theatrical exhibition, extend far beyond the proscenium arch of the late sixteenth century; the crimes are still alive and well today. Thomas Healy, in his essay "Doctor Faustus," crudely suggests that in the 1580s there "appeared to be a 'ratings war' between Church and playhouse vying for audience share" (175). Even though Marlowe was assassinated in 1593 and *The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus* was first performed no later than 1594 (probably earlier), by the end of the play which bears his name, dominant Western culture has condoned Faustus's "crimes of delusion"; indeed, corporate culture has grossly gained from the experience. *Dr. Faustus* represents a radical departure from the renaissance ideals of public, political, and social devotion—as the negative portrayals of overly ambitious men, such as Machiavellian heros like Richard II or Macbeth, clearly indicate. By brazenly challenging the limits of free will and self determination, Dr. Faustus joins the ranks of those Machiavellian heretics who placed personal power over the requirements of the community. In Marlowe's portrayal, Dr. Faustus has proven to be one of the major antecedents of today's nefarious entrepreneurs, hedge-fund managers, media moguls, and nouveau riche. Nicollo Machiavelli, as outlined in *The Prince*, simply supplied the philosophical rationalization for a mode of human industry which had been in operation since time immemorial: in the often vicious game of survival and success, anything goes. The Machiavellian notion of a separation between

being good and *doing* good was a revolutionary philosophical concept which challenged established Christian rhetoric. Clayton MacKenzie, in his book *Deathly Experiments: A Study of Icons and Emblems of Mortality in Christopher Marlowe's Plays*, regards Marlowe's play *Dr. Faustus* as something of a dramatic emblem book which incorporates texts, mottos, morals, verse, and pictures into a singular artistic gesture, marking the "divide between the intellect and the senses" (102). Moreover, Healy posits that *Doctor Faustus*, as a play, seems "constantly to defer clarifying its philosophical or metaphysical speculations while it pursues its various self-generated performances" (189). Indeed, as I intend to show in this brief essay, western culture since the early modern period has complied with and profited from Faustus's sins of conjuring, delusion, advertising, and exhibition—in other words, the corporate exploitation of false witness for personal profit.[2] I intend to outline my argument by examining three cultural environments in which Marlowe constructs the ascension of corporate hegemony: books, the study, and the theater. These environments act as concentric circles which embrace the individual, in this case Dr. Faustus. Books serve as a private venue in that reading is essentially an individual experience; the study is an intimate environment involving a select group of individuals; the theater is a public forum to which all and sundry may attend. Harry Levin, in his seminal book *Christopher Marlowe: The Overreacher*, cites the microcosm of *Dr. Faustus* as compared to the macrocosm of *Tamburlaine* (80). Indeed, *The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus* does have a distinctly internal quality to the metaphysical action compared to the frivolousness of public action. It should be noted that while two theatrical environments are conspicuously absent—the Church and the marketplace—yet two emblematic inhabitants of these invisible locales, the clergy and the CEO, are present and actively engage the doctor.[3] To Dr. Faustus, these three environments have become synonymous, they overlap and inform each other, and the learned doctor seems to move freely, seamlessly between them. Healy, in this connection, asserts that

Marlowe designed his play in order to underscore "ideas of illusion, role-playing, and theatricality around humanity's imagined identities in relation with the supernatural and natural worlds" (189). Heaven, hell, soul, books, the study, the firmament, and the theater—all venues vie for cultural legitimacy and resist attempts to succumb to human, or rather corporate, domination.

Dr. Faustus, in one of modernism's first attempts at establishing human agency or sovereignty, in addition to domination over his cultural environment, fails mightily in a number of cases. He fails, with Lucifer's assistance, to extricate himself from God's kingdom, and he fails to confirm free will as a counter-power to God's grace. In early moments of debate, Faustus wrestles with his relationship to the Almighty:

> I and *Faustus* will turne to God againe.
>
> To God? he loves thee not:
>
> The god thou serv'st is thine owne appetite (397-9)

According to Faustus' logic, if faith be false or insincere, then so must be damnation, which as Faustus asserts "terrifies not me, / for I confound hell in *Elizium* (286-7). Free Will, to early modern theologians, appears to be only a choice to reject God's grace—evil being the inevitable result. (Milton will explore the ramifications of Free Will later in the seventeenth century.) God's Grace is required if man is to perform good works, but it is not available to everyone or rather it is available but somehow we reject it. Baptism is supposed to temporarily instill grace but is not always successful. Faustus, nor anyone else for that matter, is able to retort that this world is Heaven, nor are we out of it—such an assertion sounds preposterous. Man, by definition and to borrow Mephostophilis's expression, is "out of it"—heaven that is. The recognition of the Garden in our midst (what Milton later would term a "paradise found" in the heart) requires an awakening, an enlightenment which, considering the concept of Original Sin, is denied man. The general impression of early modern scholars, as A.D. Nuttall explains in *The Alternative Trinity: Gnostic Heresy in Marlowe, Milton, and Blake*, is that they

embraced the "idea that human potential was limitless: man could ascend into the firmament of knowledge and become divine" (25). By contrast, the historic human condition dictates that man is confined to a limited amount of learning, that traditional education takes us only so far, to the edge of the garden, as it were, and no further. Faustus, on the contrary, suggests that human potential "Stretcheth as farre as doth the mind of man" (88). "The cry of the triumphant scholastic disputant, *sic probo* [satisfactorily]," Levin observes, "must ring through a wider arena than the schools, the intellect must prove itself by mastering life at large" (132). While the "moral" man must accept the limits on self-knowledge as imposed by God, the corporate executive, as personified by Dr. Faustus, rejects those limits and by doing so aligns with Satan for the destruction of the garden, which today includes the entire planet.

The Faustus legend is a familiar one, one well known throughout the Western civilization, if not the world. It tells of a learned scholar who sells his soul to the devil in return for nearly a quarter century of life and seemingly unlimited secular power.[4] The Chorus provides a succinct biography of Faustus' attributes, and concludes with obvious references to the myth of the classical overreacher, Icarus:

> So much he profits in Divinities,
> The fruitfull plot of Scholerisme grac'd,
> That shortly he was grac'd with Doctors name,
> Excelling all, whose sweete delight's despute
> In th' heavenly matters of Theologie,
> Till swolne with cunning of a selfe conceit,
> His waxen wings did mount above his reach,
> And melting, heavens conspir'd his over-throw: (15-22)[5]

A man sells his soul to the devil for "foure and twenty yeares, / Letting him live in all voluptuousness" (319-20): in the final decade of the sixteenth century which was wracked with plague, such a deal might seem irresistibly

attractive, a temptation which our sense of self preservation and power may embrace with gusto. In Marlowe's version of the tale, Faustus contracts for 24 years of life in exchange for his soul with which Lucifer will enlarge his kingdom. Lucifer, therefore, seeks to colonize earth in a similar way as England was expanding its empire. For Marlowe, God is an excluder since He has expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden, and for this reason Marlowe chooses to reject God's plan, hence his atheism (*not* a denial of God's existence, for that we must wait 300 years for Frederic Nietszche and Zarathustra). Satan, on the other hand, appears as an "includer" since all who so desire are welcomed into Hell.

In Marlowe's version of the tale Dr. Faustus, a pre-capitalist as it were, disappointed that his scholarly investment has not yielded a substantial return, solicits help from the Devil to become a "great Emperour of the world" (331). Instead of use, art, or scholarship for its own sake (a standard Aristotelian concept of goodness, or as Faustus declares himself: "...a Divine in shew, / Yet levell at the end of every Art, / And live and dis in *Aristoles* workes" (31-3)), Faustus seeks an equivalency or an exchange of values with which to further his ambitions. To do so he must convert his scholarship, his doctorate, into a sign which can be manipulated to maximum effect—in other words, an advertisement. Indeed, until the deal with Mephostophilis has been finalized, Faustus resigns to "live in speculation of this Art" (341). Sure enough, soon after Faustus has relinquished his soul, his popularity as a powerful magus flourishes. As expected and promised, Faustus's fame grows as he becomes less of a scholar and more of a celebrity. As he himself has proclaimed, the name of Faustus "whilst this bright frame doth stand,/ May be admired through the furthest land" (841-2).

Books

What defines the locus of human ingenuity is, of course, the scholar and his books (a romantic vision which Shakespeare will exploit in *The*

Tempest). After some struggle drawing blood, Faustus succeeds in signing the "Deed of Gift" which Lucifer requires. Once the contract has been settled, Faustus questions Mephostophilis concerning hell (where ever Mephostophilis exists qualifies as hell). Mephostophilis, ironically, then gives Faustus books.[6]

Hold, take this booke, peruse it thoroughly:
The iterating of these lines brings gold;
The framing of this circle on the ground
Brings Thunder, Whirle-winds, Storme and Lightening (543-6)

Mephostophilis supplies Faustus with more books of black magic, astronomy, and botany. The implication is that books, as suggested above, and the wisdom they contain, are irrelevant to the amoral aspirations of the corporate executive; instead, they seem to pacify Faustus's inquisitive mind. Indeed, the early modern period can be characterized as a search for forms, as Faustus's interest in astronomy and botany suggest. The "unities," "humors," "chain of being," "world views"—all two-dimensional manifestations of essentially metaphysical phenomena achieve reification in books. Here the agency of power is, of course, the wisdom contained in books, over which Faustus is supposedly master. He rightfully proclaims: "Negromantick bookes are heavenly" (77).

Early on, however, Faustus will abandon his books and concentrate on direct illusion for more primitive, gross, or base power.[7] In a way, Faustus quickly realizes that books, as well as his advanced learning, were simply a means to a more powerful end, that of the manipulation of delusion. Brown suggests that books enable Faustus's ability to conjure and precipitate his desire for stronger illusionary powers. The canonical status of a book, Brown continues, rests on his flexibility which "gives a text cultural presence and gives it the illusion of permanence, although it is a permanence derived from impermanence and fluidity" (145). Hence Faustus secures his pact with the devil: his soul in exchange for 24 years of magical powers with which to

mesmerize normal mortals. Faustus, it should be noted, does not pursue further scholastic knowledge; his deed of gift and later contract are simply for services rendered by Mephostophilis—a rather superficial exchange considering the extent of Faustus's prior scholarship. Faustus, like Polonius, has knowledge but no understanding, he has memorized platitudes but does not comprehend their significance. The possibility of eternal damnation, for example, Faustus dismisses with a flippant "*Che sera, sera*: / What will be shall be; *Divinitie* adeiw" (74-5). By contrast, Faustus's students can be said to possess a moral understanding of the world but insufficient knowledge. Faustus has mastered books but does not understand his soul; indeed, he has difficulty producing it on demand for Mephostophilis. "Books may be idealized in the play, but they are also exposed to misuse, to the perversions of different readers and to the kinds of corruption, or stability, epitomized by the puns and malapropisms of the comic scenes" (Brown 145). According to Faustus's misunderstanding, if salvation and faith in the world be false so too must damnation.

The selling of one's soul is sinful enough and perhaps forgivable for a just cause or as a righteous sacrifice. However, in Faustus's case, what is equally reprehensible is what he has bartered his soul for: superficial exposition. Faustus does not become altruistic, charitable, or wise; instead, he seeks to capitalize on delusion and spectacle—a malicious manipulation of images, again advertising. Nuttall claims that Faustus, "having attained power, is reduced" (68). Faustus is the first corporate cut throat who, while attempting to exploit the weakness and gullibility of others in the short term, succeeds in securing his own damnation in the long term. His act amounts to a perverted sensibility when placed in the larger context of Renaissance humanism, exacerbated by irony of human agency since Faustus, as Nuttall contends, has "brought this horror on himself" (31). For Faustus, his soul has become a unit of exchange rather than a nurturing environment or a righteous means to God's grace. Likewise, for Lucifer, the soul is a commodity to be

exchanged, to be accumulated to quantitative excess—no greater than a book, hardly worth the paper—in order to "get his glorious soule" (277). To underscore their commodity value, Valdes concludes that "these bookes, thy wit, and our experience / Shall make all Nations to Canonize us" (147).

The Study

The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus begins and ends in Faustus's study in Wittenberg. Marlowe constructed the study as a convenient extension of the academy, the scholarly retreat conducive to critical analysis and exploration. The initial conflict is not found in Faustus's learning; rather, it is that society has failed to fulfill its unspoken promise: that academic achievement will automatically lead to material gain and power.[8] For Faustus is disappointed in his lack of social standing, as if the realities of the marketplace have encroached upon his scholarly sanctuary. It is in his study that Faustus draws his critical conclusions concerning his place in the world. His disdain for his scholarly abode is obvious: "This study fits a Mercenarie drudge, / Who aimes at nothing but externall trash, / Too servile and illiberall for mee" (61-3). Faustus's disdain will become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

When Faustus introduces himself to the audience, alone in his study, he dismisses "Logicke," Physicke," and "Divinitie" in rapid succession as impotent endeavors unworthy of his acumen. He instead turns his attention to "...Metaphisicks of Magitians, / And Negromantick bookes" (77). What Faustus confesses he most desires are "Lines, Circles, Signes, Letters, and Characters" which promise a "world of profite and delight, / Of power, of honour, and omnipotence" (81). In short, Faustus forsakes the internal, metaphysical world and its riches, of which he seems bored, for the superficial sphere of spectacle.

As the play proceeds, the study becomes an enclosed theater that illustrates Faustus's inner debate concerning his desires for fame and power. Personified aspects of Faustus's conscience enter, debate, admonish, and then

depart, leaving Faustus alone with his decision. Three pairs of characters enter on stage as if to consult and confirm Faustus's radical change of vocation. The servant Wagner, the good angel and the evil spirit, students of the black arts Valdes and Cornelius, two "schollers" (conversing near Faustus's study), Lucifer, a devil, Mephostophilis—all characters confront Faustus concerning his impending pact with the devil. First, two angels appear: the good angel accuses Faustus of blasphemy while the bad angel tempts Faustus with power "on earth" (103). Faustus dismisses the good angel's pleas for restraint and instead embraces the bad angel's prophesy that Faustus become "Lord and Commander" of earth and sky (104). After some debate concerning the advantages and disadvantages of Faustus's confederacy with the Devil, Faustus finally decides to proceed with the dastardly deal.

As a perceived victim of society's deception, Faustus decides to exact revenge on society by, ironically, mastering the art of deception by enlisting the aid of Lucifer through his agent Mephostophilis, "my companion Prince in hell" (640). Faustus, desiring material profit, settles for illusionary power, in an attempt perhaps to deceive the deceivers (i.e., church and political leaders). Faustus employs a physical sleight-of-hand to expose and shame the spiritual deception which he feels he has suffered. Having been seduced by Mephostophilis, Faustus seeks to master the art of seduction via conjuring to become adept at the wily ways of corporate culture. Faustus, Brown somewhat laboriously points out, "collapses the differences between reality and representation, meaning and sign, text and performance. [The scene] questions what is real by suggesting that the thing representing is none other than the thing represented" (146)—what you see is what you get. Mephostophilis, thus, makes Faustus an offer he can't refuse: 24 years of faithful obedience in return for Faustus's soul. Faustus willingly forsakes knowledge, beauty, art, honor, and wealth for the power of deception and seduction. Faustus now commits a cultural sin but a corporate benediction: he has forsaken the reality and embraced the representation. "Nothing so sweet as

Magicke is to him / Which he preferres before his chiefest blisse" (25-7).

Next, Valdes and Cornelius, students of magic, approach Faustus who reveals his dark reasoning and desire:

> Philosophy is odious and obscure,
> Both Law and Physicke are for petty wits:
> Divinitie is basest of the three,
> Unpleasant, harsh, contemptible and vilde:
> 'Tis magick, magick, that hath ravisht me. (133-7).

His two mortal friends, unlike the two angels, promise to educate Faustus in the rudiments of magic so that he too can astonish and captivate with illusion. Finally, Wagner meets two of Faustus's colleagues with news of Faustus's sudden appeal to the superficial joys of magic and illusion. They fear that Faustus has been seduced to "that damned Art" for which Valdes and Cornelius are famous, and vow to consult with the Rector for advice on how to warn their friend against yielding to the seduction of corporate conjuring.

Fast forward. It is night and Faustus, again in his study, has made Lucifer and four devils appear. One devil, being particularly loathsome, is discharged, only to be replaced by Mephostophilis himself, servant to Lucifer. Faustus questions Mephostophilis concerning Lucifer and hell. Mephostophilis informs the audience that Lucifer is obsessed with acquiring souls and enlarging "his Kingdome" (429). Hence whenever there is the possibility of a soul becoming available, the servants of Lucifer rush to the site. Souls do not interest Faustus; he would rather be Emperor of the world. Mephostophilis promises to return to Faustus after conferring with Lucifer.

Here follows a kind of spiritual tug-of-war between the angels and the devils. The two angels appear, the good angel urging Faustus to repent, that salvation can been attained if only he will repent his sins. The bad angel counters that the devils will tear Faustus to pieces should he entertain thoughts of repentance. Forthwith, Lucifer, Belzebub, and Mephostophilis appear and proceed to show Faustus a parade of the seven deadly sins. After which

Faustus confesses that his soul has been titillated by this gross display. Before departing Lucifer gives Faustus a book which will allow Faustus to assume any shape he wishes. Faustus, resolved to accept damnation, admits that the God he serves is his own appetite (399) and renews his commitment to Mephostophilis, Beelzebub, and Lucifer. The two angels reappear and continue their appeal: heaven verses wealth. Faustus affectively ignores them. On stage the two angels seem preoccupied with their own logistics, and as they enter and exit, they seem to argue primarily amongst themselves regardless of whose soul hangs in the balance. They could easily be played as an auxiliary pair of clowns.[9)]

Unlike the church or the court or the marketplace, social truths can still be discerned in the study and it is here that Faustus draws his most damning conclusions. Alone in his study, at midnight, Faustus succeeds in conjuring Mephostophilis and instigates the dialogue of his own demise:

Faustus. Where are you damn'd?

Mephostophilis. In hell.

Faustus. How comes it then that thou art out of hell?

Mephostophilis. Why this is hell: nor am I out of it. (301-4)

Incredulous, Faustus chooses to dismiss Mephostophilis's frank reply which suggests, as Garrett A. Sullivan Jr. points out, that "hell is always carried within the damned; it is both no place and every place" (240). Once the deal is signed—"foure and twenty yeares [...] to live in all voluptuousnesse" (320)—Mephostophilis dominates Faustus's attention. Lucifer, like most modern CEOs, promises riches but delivers trifles. When Faustus desires a wife, for instance, Mephostophilis delivers a "hot whore" (534) and proceeds to ridicule the institution of marriage as a "ceremoniall toy" (535). When queried about "who made the world" (618-20), Mephostophilis, the agent for Lucifer, steadfastly refuses to answer and displays a sophistication which was new to the Renaissance stage. Mephisto, confirms Jeffery Burton Russell, in his book *Mephistopheles: The Devil in the Modern World*, is not entirely evil:

> for he regrets his loss of felicity; moody and introspective, he is far from the stupid, clowning Devil of the medieval stage and in some ways prefigures the Romantic Satan. (65)

Mephostophilis, as Faustus discovers, immediately reneges on the promise: he does not know everything nor he is forthcoming with information he does possess, except for one area: hell. When questioned about hell, for example, Mephostophilis replies "All places shall be hell that is not heaven" (515)—sophistic double talk. Nevertheless, Faustus remains curious about the consequences and final destination of his own damnation:

> *Faustus.* I thinke Hel's a fable.
>
> *Mephostophilis.* I, thinke so still, till experience change thy mind.
>
> *Faustus.* Why, does thou think that *Faustus* shall be damn'd?
>
> *Mephostophilis.* I, of necessity, for here's the scrowle
>
> In which thou has given thy soule to *Lucifer*. (516-20)

What traditionally was construed as a sacred sanctum, for Faustus, the study has become a gateway to hell.

At this juncture, Marlowe exposes a crucial flaw in the as-yet-unnamed, unarticulated corporate logic: a kind of obverse hermeneutics,[10] wherein the symbol or sign proceeds or predicates the meaning of the experience, a future brand mentality. Faustus, for example, not fully comprehending the word hell, questions Mephostophilis only to be told that hell is the here and now. For Mephostophilis the word hell proceeds from his experience, whereas for Faustus hell is an abstraction uninformed by his experience—until now. Faustus and his understanding of damnation are similar. Humanistic logic presupposes that a sign or symbol proceeds from an experience or event, or object. We don't, for example, create the word cat and then search for an object to match the word. But for Faustus, words like heaven, hell, or damnation have no corresponding experience from which the words emerge. Today, for instance, words like google or skype begin as obscure brand names and then the corporate meaning of the sign is constructed

in the mind of the consumer. This act of seduction is an essential component in the corporate cult of conjuring. For Faustus, preconceived ideas have failed him, whereas these indeterminate conceptions succeed within the corporate world, or rather within hell.

The Theater

When the Chorus introduces the drama by announcing that "we now must performe / the forme of *Faustus* fortunes, good or bad" (7-8) the audience is alerted that what they are about to behold is an act of conjuration, a mere representation of tragedy, in what promises to be a semblance of meta-narrative, a conspicuous display of allegorical gesture. Brown, in examining the conflicts between dramatic "forms," concludes by exposing the "destabilizing" of the priorities of *external over internal, surface over depth, performance over text*" (142, emphasis added). The "carnivalesque quality of Renaissance culture," Healy observes by citing Mikhail Bakhtin, "where powerful abstract issues [...] can be reduced to some form of grotesque material representations" (186). The Chorus invites the audience to accept the play as an example of a self-referential act, dislodged from social and religious ideals of realism, to illustrate the very delusional crimes of which Faustus himself is guilty. By extension, moreover, the audience becomes more than mere witnesses to the doctor's downfall; we become compliant in Faustus's temptation, subsequent sin, and damnation. In short, the audience has psychologically crossed the proscenium arch and now engages with Faustus. "In Renaissance drama," Healy writes, "various devices are employed to remind the audience of its 'role' as spectators and, consequently, of the participation in the drama rather than only passively witnessing it" (188). Faustus, therefore, becomes an agent of our own damnation and increasingly remote salvation; Faustus's tragedy becomes the audience's tragedy. The morality against spectacle which may have resonated with utmost seriousness in the church becomes, under Marlowe's talent, an object of entertainment and

easy ridicule. Nevertheless, Faustus, however pathetic his demise, still dies for the post-modern sins of worshipping image over reality. Healy concludes with an indictment of Faustus which can be equally applied to the audience: "Faustus comes increasingly to perform what the commercial drama generally was seeking to offer its spectators—that which produces contentment and wonder" (187). The theater audience has been primed and is anxiously anticipating the final end of Faustus, as per his bargain with Mephostophilis, his seizure and descent into hell, much like a modern spectator looks forward to watching film (and the inevitable, interminal reruns) of a celebrated assassination, plane crash, building collapse or some similar, inexplicable disaster.

Having exchanged his soul for superior conjuring power, Faustus leaves his study and his books, now considered "superstitious" (893), and begins to travel throughout the globe in just over a week:

> [...] whirling round with this circumference,
> Within the concave compasse of the Pole,
> From East to West his Dragons swiftly glide,
> And in eight daies did bring him home againe. (764-8)

Paris, Naples, Venice, Padua—the cultural capitals of the world have become Faustus's oyster. The main theatrical location, however, is Rome, in an audience with the Pope and various cardinals, whom Faustus entertains with magic displays bordering on slapstick. Faustus immediately describes at some length the gaudy splendor of the palace and the luxurious presence of the Pope himself. Instead of a benign center of antiquity, Brett Foster notes that, in the early modern period, "many Englishmen saw Rome as a hostile, tyrannical place, the seat of the pope, site of the Inquisition" (180). Faustus requests Mephostophilis to make him an "Actor" in order that the Pope be duly impressed with his skill at illusion. Rendered invisible, Faustus surveys a papal banquet, reeking havoc by snatching food and wine from the clutches of the startled cardinals. Faustus concludes his adolescent display by boxing

Pope Adrian's ears.

Next, Faustus and Mephostophilis shift to the next theatrical location, a royal court, wherein the German Emperor Charles and Bruno, Duke of Saxony, are again publicly entertained and ridiculed with Faustus's feats of magic which are becoming more superficial. The encounter, Lisa Hopkins reminds us, recalls the supposed "necromancer Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa and his entertainment for the Emperor Charles V" (282). The court scene ends with Faustus producing a pair of horns on the head of the upstart Benvolio. Finally, Faustus produces a cluster of delicious grapes for the Duke of Vanholt and his Duchess who proclaims that they are the "sweetest grapes that e'er I tasted" (1587). If, as Patrick Cheney suggests, Marlowe was "fascinated by the idea of firstness" (17), then Faustus can arguably be recognized as the first progenitor of consumptive corporate culture which exploits the image (advertising) to create a false sense of cultural value. Faustus can be viewed as the first of a long line of entrepreneurs who traffic in delusion, such as J. Walter Thompson, Robert Murdoch, or Walt Disney. "Such is the force of Magicke, and my spels," that Faustus proclaims himself a "Conjurer laureate / That canst commaund great *Mephostophilis*" (259-60). Likewise, modern visual audiences are as guilty as Faustus for being seduced by the performance images which infiltrate the twentieth-century electronic landscape. Brown attempts to define the various meanings of the word "perform" (prior performance, manuscript, promise, a class in school, an agreement between two parties, and published text) but finally concludes that the word form "refers to the shape, configuration or visible aspect of an object and, as such, it would seem to refer to the superficial and debased aspects of the object" (142).

Considering *Doctor Faustus* as a modern indictment of a consumer society oriented to a constant flow of electronic images which have supplanted physical reality, Healy concludes that the "play's preoccupations with creating theatre, with organizing performances, may come to seem its ultimate rationale" (189). Obviously, Marlowe has extended the boundaries of the

theater and proscenium arch to now include the histrionics of the church, court, and inevitably the marketplace.

Damnation—The Gift of Impunity

In conclusion, Faustus begins the play as an accomplished scholar but finishes as a parody, an empty shell of his former identity. The drama ends where it began, in Faustus's Wittenberg study. His "foure and twenty yeares of liberty... [spent] in pleasure and in daliance" (839-40) have passed quickly, and now Mephostophilis has come to collect the debt of Faustus's soul. Before the final reckoning, however, Faustus desires to gaze upon "That heavenly *Hellen*, which I saw of late" (1762), and, upon seeing her image, forthwith delivers his hymn of grace to the "face that Launcht a thousand ships, / And burnt the toplesse Towers of *Ilium*" (1768-9). I would like to point out that when Faustus confronts Helen, he confronts a synecdoche: her face has become representative of her whole being. Faustus craves beauty, the image of Helen, as an antidote to the damnation to which he has resigned. Helen's heart, soul, or intelligence is never challenged or questioned; indeed, MacKenzie observes that the image of Helen as understood by the early modern mind "carried with it the full weight of sexual impropriety and national disaster" (102). Marlowe's apostrophe to Helen is at once romantic, sentimental, and finally ludicrous—given that he is addressing an illusion, an idealized ghost. Faustus even goes so far as to kiss the apparition, as one might display affection towards a celebrity's photograph or to a plastic doll. Faustus has sought an immortality on par with Helen and, thanks to Marlowe and judging from continuous debate from Faustus's Elizabethan debut and into the twenty-first century, he has achieved it. Faustus, in a private moment admits that "sweete pleasure conquer'd deepe despaire" (575). Damnation, like a slow, addictive suicide, can be a sweet and pleasant process.

The "schollers" reappear and plead with Faustus to atone for his sin against God but their appeal is in vain since Faustus now "hast no hope of

heaven, / Therefore despaire, thinke onely upon hell" (1880-1). The good and bad angels also reappear and make a final entreaty for Faustus to repent and save his soul but they depart when it becomes obvious that the "jawes of hell are open to receive thee [Faustus]" (1908). The "Watch" strikes and Faustus begins his speedy descent into hell. Indeed, Marlowe crams an hour of real-time action into a mere 55 lines which accelerates the excitement of Faustus's ruination. Levin remarks eloquently on Faustus's theatrical and heroic compression:

> This [condensation of time] is much too fast, and we share the suspense with Faustus, whose contract expires at midnight; and yet, in a sense, it is slow enough to fathom—as it were—the thoughts of a drowning man. It is a soliloquy in the profoundest sense, since it isolates the speaker; at the end, as at the beginning, we find him alone in his study. Tragedy is an isolating experience. (151)

As a final desperate plea for mercy, Faustus offers to burn his "bookes" (1982) but to no avail. Escorted by Lucifer and a host of devils, Faustus makes a horrific exit from the stage to the trap doors to hell, a death which Nuttall describes as "not bleakly deserved but is in some way terrible" (41).

The Chorus enters a final time to announce that "Cut is the branch that might have growne full straight" (2002). The medieval tradition, from which Faustus has come, emphasized a code of behavior which united the various pre-state, pre-national tribes, or as Seamus Heaney translated the opening stanza of *Beowulf*: "Behaviour that admired / is the path to power among people everywhere" (3).[11] Faustus breaks with this ethical tradition and embraces a more Machiavellian code of power and survival. Behavior, an end in itself, as Machiavelli instructed, has become obsolete; pragmatics, making a marketable, profitable difference, has become the goal for early modern, corporate man. As Faustus, echoing the scripture of Romans 6:23 and 1 John 1:8, proclaims at the beginning of the drama, *Stipendium peccati mors est*: "The reward of sin is death" (66-7). In my opinion, Faustus is guilty of

amartia, *amatano*, *amatanene*—all Greek words meaning sin, in other words, "missing the point" of God's will. What Dr. Faustus has "missed" of course is the chance at life everlasting by practicing "more then heavenly power permits" (2009)—overreaching. His first sin being pride, Russell characterizes the "degeneration of Faustus from a scholar thirsty for knowledge to a clownish trickster" (64-5).

For his crimes against humanity, Dr. Faustus suffers eternal damnation. Contemporaries, (including assassin Ingram Frazier, almost certainly working under orders from the highest echelons of Elizabethan power) most likely wished the same for Christopher Marlowe. It is perhaps no accident that Marlowe was arrested in the Netherlands, in 1592, and charged with "coining" (counterfeiting), creating and trafficking a false image. In the Elizabethan era, as David Riggs points out, counterfeiting was "high treason and carried the death penalty" (35). After an interrogation with Lord Burghley (Sir William Cecil) to answer for allegations made by the notorious spy and informer Richard Baines, Marlowe escapes punishment and is freed. Marlowe's offense of simulacra seems a convenient prologue, along with connotations of adulterating and sedition according to Charles Nicholl, for the crimes of illusion in which Faustus will indulge (234-9).

As Hamlet understood, the Machiavellian quest for power, success, and survival predicates a dismissal (or rejection, sacrifice) of conscience. The CEO and accompanying corporate corruption which western culture has experienced since 1600 is irreligious and, if we consider Dr. Faustus, probably irreversible. Corporate sins—thanks to Dr. Faustus, who elucidated the way and paid with his life so that others, more vile and corrupt, could prosper—have dominated the cultural landscape of the post-modern era. Success, power, energy, resources—temporarily achieved for an elite few (the 1% as it were), have drastically undermined more scholastic or Aristotelian motivations. Final repentance and redemption are denied Faustus; more accurately, Faustus has denied God's Grace and forgiveness, to himself.

Nuttall underscores this subtle distinction when he writes of Faustus's "moral agency": "an active excluding of grace rather than a withholding of grace on God's part" (31). Perhaps the only positive result that can be finally attributed to Faustus is that he remains a man of his word: he keeps his promise to Lucifer, he does not renege, as it were, on his original pact with the devil.

The legacy of Dr. Faustus is complex: man's relation to God, Free Will, man's relation to fellow men, faith, honesty. I have tried to show that Faustus made essentially corporate decisions, that is to say, he prioritized profit and personal gain over scholastic endeavor which would have benefited humanity in general. Early modern resources indicate malevolent, indeed Satanic, causes for reckless ambition and ruthless acquisition—corporate virtues. Faustus enlisted the aid of satanic mendacity, personified in Lucifer through the agency of Mephostophilis, for his superficial successes, since the metaphoric evidence strongly suggests that corporate discourse is one of deception and desecration. Dr. Faustus's intellectual ambition degenerated to a raw grasp for visual or graphic omnipotence. Indeed, Richard Wilson notes that Marlowe "inscribed in his tragedy of the Devil's Pact the magical solution power offered his profession, and the artistic opportunities" (226). Faustus embraced a kind of spiritual slavery, an indenture to the Devil in order to indulge his fantasies of power. Faustus realized that, in order to join the ranks of burgeoning corporate culture, he must create a radical change of consciousness: he must view the soul, not as an environment, but as a commodity to be exchanged, as a means of profit. The soul, in the corporate view, is an object to be be bartered and exploited. The corporation which Faustus helped define through his embrace of damnation as a necessary price for power, is a kind of netherworld on earth—business as usual. The modern CEO has accomplished similar visual victories, through incessant advertising campaigns, but without the threat of eternal damnation—as far as can be determined. In short, Dr. Faustus, the consummate corporate criminal, has endured damnation so that future corporate executives may be spared.

Faustus, by way of his corporate crucifixion, has given future CEOs the gift of impunity. Ensconced within a rapacious corporate culture, post-modern man need not dream of dystopian futures: this is hell, nor are we out of it.

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Notes

1) In *Histriomastix*, his 1632 polemic against the drama, William Prynne records the tale that actual devils once appeared on the stage during a performance of *Faustus* at the Belsavage playhouse, the "visible apparition of the devil" himself deigned to make an appearance "to the great amazement of both the actors and spectators." Some people were allegedly driven mad, "distracted with that fearful sight." True or not, such publicity is easily staged and is priceless.

2) The issue of the "A" and "B" texts of *Doctor Faustus* appears to be serious, relevant, unresolved, and unending. For simplicity's sake, I have chosen to refer all quotations to Bowers, *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe,* Second Edition, 1981, which cites the 2009-line, B-text by line number only, not by act and scene (A-text is cited in an appendix). I would like to circumvent the textual debate by announcing my emphasis on the theatrical performance and the visual enactments on stage rather than a printed text, through which I want to advance the image of Faustus as a primitive advertising executive.

3) In hindsight, Faustus may have had more success if he had incorporated: "Faustus and Company, Ltd."

4) The legend that the American bluesman Robert Johnson (1911-38) sold his soul to the devil "at the crossroads" furthers this Western cultural meme.

5) All citations from *The Tragedie of Doctor Faustus* refer to: *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe.* Second Edition. Volumes II. Ed. Fredson Bowers. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

6) It is interesting to note that Faustus tells Mephostophilis that he would like a girlfriend but not a wife (perhaps anticipating Mephostophilis's harangue against matrimony), as if

the female creatures were intrinsically different. Is Marlowe, the man who preferred (as Richard Baines proclaimed in his infamous "Note") boys, suggesting that a wife is a further incarnation of hell?

7) An issue which William Shakespeare examines in *The Tempest* as Prospero's magic is made possible by his books (so Caliban asserts) and which Prospero openly acknowledges as a power prized "above my dukedom" (1.2.167) provided (amongst other things) by the "gentle" Gonzalo. In contrast to Prospero, who, in order to "abjure" his "rough magic," vows to "drown" his book, and break his magic staff, in the realization of a higher moral understanding and justice (5.1.50-7). Later, in 1991 to be exact, director Peter Greenaway, highlighted the prominence of the printed word and *The Tempest* in his film *Prospero's Books*. Furthermore, two recent films directed Roman Polanski attest to the power of movable type: *The Ninth Gate* and *The Ghost Writer*—both movies feature a book as a main character.

8) A modern correlation might be: "If you're so smart, why aren't you rich?"

9) cf. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

10) cf. Anthony Gibbons who argued in 1982 for a concept of "double hermeneutics" in which the interpretation or construction of meaning is transpersonal, a dialectic.

11) Although I prefer Heaney, other translations of this passage include: "Through deeds that bring praise, a man shall prosper in every country" (E. Talbot Donaldson, 1975); "For among all peoples it is only through those actions which merit praise that a many may prosper" (David Wright, 1957).

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